



## **The Apostles' Creed (Part 10) – The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints**

Matt Chandler – November 1, 2015

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[Video]

**Male:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth...

**Female:** And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

**Male:** Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

**Male:** Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

**Male:** He descended to hell.

**Female:** The third day he rose again from the dead.

**Male:** He ascended to heaven...

**Female:** And sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty...

**Female:** From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

**Male:** I believe in the Holy Spirit...

**Female:** The holy catholic church...

**Male:** The communion of saints...

**Male:** The forgiveness of sins...

**Male:** The resurrection of the body...

**Male:** And the life everlasting.

**Male:** Amen.

[End of video]

Hey, how are we? Doing well? Excellent. Hey, enjoying the common grace of an extra hour of sleep is always helpful, unless you have small children. Then it's not at all. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Mark 12 is where we're going to camp out. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. As always, I just would rather you see that I'm not making any of this up. We're pulling it straight out of the Bible.

At this point, we're on week 10 in our study of the Apostles' Creed, the idea of together, we believe. One of the unique things that begins to happen now in the creed is up until this point, the Apostles' Creed has been giving us a picture of who God is, right? God is triune in nature. It is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, three in one. Although that's confusing to us, it certainly isn't confusing to God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

When they speak, they speak of their relationship with one another seamlessly in a way that could be confusing to us. It is certainly not confusing to them. Now what begins to happen in the creed is the idea that God is three in one begins to shape how we see our relationship with one another. Now we have this kind of vertical understanding established. Now the creed starts to turn to the horizontal implications of that vertical understanding. That's what we'll see happen in the creed today.

I'll start with Kevin Vanhoozer, who is a prominent theologian. Here's a quote about how our understanding of God begins to affect our understanding of one another. "Because God is three persons in relationship, the only way we can realize the *imago Dei* in humanity..." I'll stop there. Maybe you're not a Christian and don't have a lot of church background, or maybe you do have a background and just haven't been listening.

The *imago Dei* is that you and I as human beings, as *Homo sapiens*, have been made in the image of God. Because we have been made in the image of God, we are more valuable than the rest of the creative order. We know this at a basic level. I have two dogs and three kids. If there's a trade, the dogs go. It's not like, "Should it be Audrey or Gunner?" It's not a wrestle. It's a no-brainer that my three children are far more valuable than my two dogs.

That doesn't give me the right to be cruel or brutal to anything in the creative order. Rather, I've been made in the image of God. Because you and I as human beings have been made in the image of God, God is at work among us in a way that is unique. Vanhoozer would argue that the only way we can realize the *imago Dei*, the only way we can realize the purpose for which we exist in humanity is to form a community of persons in loving relationship. He would define that as the church.

"The church then is the community of God, not only because it has been created by the triune God but because the church shares in the triune community itself." If I could take Vanhoozer and kind of distill it, I would simply say that the Trinity means that God, in essence, is relational. God is a relational God. He exists in relationship. Then it's not a stretch to understand why you and I were created for the glory of his name and right relationship with him and right relationship with one another.

Our God is a relational God, and if we begin to look at what he does, this relational God forms a people. Now, it's important to always clarify when you start talking about the people God has created that everyone has God as their Creator, but not everyone has God as their Father. Are you tracking? We are all created by God, but he is not the Father of us all. Are you tracking? I'll try to tease that out as we move on.

When God creates a people, that people, according to both the Old and New Testament, are the people who are in right relationship with him. Those who are in right relationship with him are called, specifically in the Old Testament, God's friends, the sons and daughters of God, priests, God's assembly, the people of God, the bride of God, servants of God, God's flock, and subjects and citizens of God's kingdom.

All of those titles are put on the people of God, not specifically a person but on the people of God throughout the Old Testament. Then when we move into the New Testament, the big debate in Jesus' day is how do you distill, how do you take all the prophets taught and all the law taught, and how do you distill that? What is the greatest commandment?

If there's a commandment that sits over and on top of all of the other commandments, what is the thing I have to be dialed in on for the fullness of life, to please God, to live in the richest, fullest life possible horizontally? What is it I must obey? We're going to see Jesus answer that question here in Mark 12. If you have your Bibles, Mark 12. We're starting in verse 28.

**"And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he [Jesus] answered them well, asked him, 'Which commandment is the most important of all?' Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'"**

We see in another gospel that here is Jesus' argument. You want the key to what God is up to in the universe? God is after establishing right relationship with himself, between us and him, and right relationship with one another, flowing out of that right relationship with him, so much so that Jesus is arguing here that the greatest commandment, the one you must be dialed in to is that you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and you must love your neighbor as yourself.

If you know your Bible, the argument then becomes, "Well, who is my neighbor?" Jesus' answer to that is, "Yes." "Who is my neighbor? Who is not my neighbor?" "Yes." The biblical worldview for your life and mine is that we might be in right relationship with God and right relationship with one another. If you're paying attention, this is what your heart is hungry for. This is what you desire. This is what you're trying to get a hold of.

Yet, the modern world we live in wars against us. We're a back porch people, aren't we? Nobody spends a ton of cash on their front porch. You don't have a fire pit in your front yard. We spend money on our back porch with giant, 9-foot privacy pit fences, barbed wire, to defend our kids from the dangers of Highland Village and Flower Mound. We hide. We scarcely know our neighbors. In fact, if we're really honest, we know a ton of people and none of them well. We know a ton of people and none of them well.

Yet, the life God has designed for you and me to live in the fullness of what God intended is that we would be right with him and that we would walk deeply with one another. Those two are

correlated. They're connected. This is Jesus' argument. "You want to fulfill the law and the prophets? Then love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself, for on these two hinge all of the law and prophets." If you're doing this, you're obeying everything else.

We live in a day and age where this is feeling more and more and more impossible, more and more out of reach. Even the space we dwell in isn't built for it. Our neighborhoods aren't designed for this type of interaction anymore. The way we live life is not designed. As I watch my 12-year-old do life with her friends, I'm jealous. They make space. They're going to have fun. They will get together. They're going to figure it out. We were all that way once. Then we grew crusty.

As we've read the Apostles' Creed together, I've said every week for 10 weeks that we're rejecting modern discipleship of the world toward us, and we're embracing the triune God of the Bible. That's what we do when we read the creed together. Since I've started this series, there have been these two phrases that every time we have read them, until I have covered them, I could feel...

The first one, we would stand, and we would read the Apostles' Creed, and we would get to, "...descended into hell..." and I could feel a collective, "What does that mean?" in the room. "He descended into hell and on the third day rose..." I could just feel, "Did he? Did he descend into hell though, Matt?" The other one was the phrase we'll cover today, "...the holy catholic church, the communion of saints..." I can feel that some of us are like, "What? Are we Catholics?"

Some of you brothers and sisters who have been visiting with us for a long time who are Catholics or have a Catholic background are like, "Told you. I knew it." Right? What is happening in this phrase, "...the holy catholic church, the communion of saints..."? I love when you ask questions because I've spent all week studying to answer that very question. With that said, why don't you stand with me if you're willing, and let's read the Apostles' Creed together.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

Why don't you have a seat? We're going to cover the phrase, "I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints." It's not two phrases; it's one phrase. We believe, we embrace, we reject this and hold fast to the belief in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints. I want to take those phrases, separate them, and unpack them. When this phrase is used, "the holy catholic church," this is not a reference to the Roman Catholic Church, but rather the universality of the church. You and I belong to a bigger family than we can fathom.

You and I have brothers and sisters all over the world who have no shared language but the language of the gospel, who have no real shared socioeconomic status or race, but you and I belong to a family of faith that goes well beyond what we see here today. All over the world, in different languages and different contexts and different styles, men and women, our brothers and sisters are making much of Jesus Christ, preaching the Word of God, singing to God, breaking the bread of Communion, and enjoying the God of our salvation.

See, what God has done at The Village is always fun for me to marvel at, but it's so tiny in comparison to what he's doing globally. Right now, all over the world, people we will not meet until that day are worshipping and making much of Jesus, and this is an ever-expanding family. Parents have conversations about, "How many kids are we going to have? Are we going to have this many kids?" Moms will be like, "Look, I'm done. If you put a... I'll harm something. I'm just saying we're done." The husband is like, "Yeah, I think that's..."

God is like, "We're going to keep going. We're going to keep adopting. We have a whole globe here. Let's just keep getting them." He's saving and adopting and bringing into his own the family. The Bible says, "Once you were not a people, but now you are a people." When the Apostles' Creed says "the holy catholic church," it's referencing all Christians everywhere over all time as a part of our family, as a part of something we belong to.

It's why I often want to encourage you to, as often as you can, take a short-term trip. Get out of the U.S. I'm a military son, patriot. I have my loyalties to a greater kingdom, but when all is said and done, to watch other men and women of different tribes, different contexts, different languages worship our God, to be in a room where you don't understand anything but, "I think they just said Jesus." Here's the good news. I think "hallelujah" translates as "hallelujah" in every language out there. Just sit there and vaguely understand, but to watch the zeal of others burn for our Jesus is really profound. In fact, we get a glimpse of it in Revelation 7. Here's what it says:

**"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"**

This is the holy catholic church, the church universal, not talking about a building or location, but all believers over all time always. This view of the kingdom of God should stifle and stunt any type of arrogant swagger around your church home. If you love The Village Church, praise God for that, but we're not in competition with anybody else. The Devil, and he's already lost. Praise God for what he's doing at the church down the street.

I can assure you this. There are thousands of churches who are faithfully preaching the Bible all around us, faithfully proclaiming the gospel. They might have their holes, but we have ours. May our mouths always praise those who seek to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Maybe they have a different style. Maybe they do it a different way, but we have no enemy but our flesh and Satan.

We are a part of the church universal, and we're closer to this day than we were when the service started. This is a fulfillment of the promise God made, starting in Genesis 3, verbally and clearly spoken in Genesis 12, and confirmed through the law and the prophets. The nations of the earth would be blessed. Here we are. You think Abraham was thinking, "Oh, yeah, those Texans. God is going to rescue those Texans." Gosh. We weren't anywhere on his radar. He didn't even know we existed, yet here we are.

That's the holy catholic church. He doesn't just stop there. The phrase doesn't stop there. He moves on to talk now about our interaction, the communion of the saints. You have this big church universal that has nothing to do with walls or buildings or meeting spaces. It has to do with all Christians everywhere across all time and location. Now, he kind of dials it in and begins to talk about the communion of the saints, or that spot where we cross paths, where we gather, where we come together, where our lives kind of mingle and marinate. We take on the flavor of one another.

One of the best definitions I've ever heard... By the way, I've argued for 13 years on the importance of the local church. I think it's God's good design that we would belong to a local church, not that we would go to one. That's different than belonging. That we would belong to a local community of

faith, and people in that local church are going to bother us. In their sinfulness bothering us, and in our sinfulness bothering them, we will be sanctified, made more holy, and reflect more clearly the beauty of Christ's gospel.

I've argued that for a long time. I don't think this is the spot to do that. I've done that enough. Here's one of my favorite definitions of the local church. It's by a buddy of mine, Jonathan Leeman, who has written a lot of books on church and church order. Here's what he said. "A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ's name to officially affirm and oversee one another's membership in Jesus Christ and his kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances."

If you're not a Christian or don't have a background in church, gospel ordinances are baptism and Communion. Those would be our two gospel ordinances. This would be the definition of a local church. I love his definition. I just think it's a really pregnant definition. What I mean by that is I think you could take each one of these lines and kind of tease it out a little bit. I want to tease it out a little bit in regards to what this looks like on the ground, what the communion of saints looks like on the ground.

At what used to be our Denton Campus and is now The Village Church Denton, an autonomous church... By the way, thanks for your prayers. They are killing it. They are doing great up there. They continue to grow numerically, in conversions. It's just a beautiful thing God is accomplishing up there. One of their pastors is Lan Leavell. If you remember the video we watched, you don't quite know what to do with Lan. He's always wearing a Harley shirt. He has the handlebar mustache, but he's like 65 years old. I think he rolls his own cigarettes.

It's just kind of confusing. "This guy is a pastor? What?" I love Lan, but Lan constantly uses the language of marination. "We need to marinate." I don't like the imagery, yet I understand it. To go to a church is not the same thing as to belong. In Leeman's definition of gathering together consistently in order to kind of speak into each other's lives and hold one another up to what Christ has called us, to affirm in one another the presence of Christ... I get it, yes, but how? How do we do that?

In the New Testament, the New Testament gives us a space in which we are to walk in this communion of the saints. He does that through the 59 "one anothers." I thought I wasn't going to read all of them. I'm going to read all of them now. I know now in the 11:15. I've done this several

times. I'm going to read all of them. I said I wasn't going to, and now I'm going to. I'm going to. Here are the 59 "one anothers."

Love one another. Serve one another. Accept one another. Strengthen one another. Help one another. Encourage one another. Care for one another. Forgive one another. Submit to one another. Commit to one another. Build trust with one another. Quick question. How do you build trust with another person? Well, you're close enough for them to betray your trust, correct? You build trust because people keep coming through for you, which means you're close enough for you to need to trust them with something, and they come through in being trustworthy, right?

That means these things cannot be worked out in attendance on the weekend in a room as large as this one or any of the ones that are watching this one right now. To simply go to, to simply come and sit and hear a sermon is not the fullness of what God has for you in Christ. It's simply not. Be devoted to one another. Be patient with one another. Amen? Be interested in one another. Be accountable to one another. Confess to one another. Live in harmony with one another.

Do not pass judgment on one another. Do not slander one another. Instruct one another. Greet one another. Admonish one another. Spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Meet with one another. Agree with one another. Be concerned for one another. Be humbled to one another in love. Be compassionate to one another. How could you possibly be compassionate to anyone when you don't know their story, you don't know their life, you don't know their history, you don't know what they've been through?

To know where people are coming from creates empathy and compassion. If you just watch the behavior in a moment, you can lack it. If you know someone's background, you're far more apt to have empathy and compassion for them than if you don't know their background. In order to know someone's background, you must actually know them, right? Not on the Facebook level. I'm not dogging Facebook. It's a beautiful tool of life-sucking, time-killing...

Do not anger one another, which I might have just broken for some of you. Do not lie to one another. Do not grumble to one another. Give preference to one another. Be at peace with one another. Be of the same mind to one another. Comfort one another. Be kind to one another. Live in peace with one another. Carry one another's burdens. Again, these "one anothers" are impossible if you simply go to a church rather than belonging to one, right?

In fact, the very idea of belonging to a church is to operate in these "one anothers" imperfectly but seriously pursuing, right? This is the battleground of the "one anothers." This is where we're going to commit to work out the "one anothers." Where is the space I'm going to put down roots and say, "Here is the space I'm going to work this out in"?

A lot of people, I've learned, never join churches for one of two reasons. One, they have figured out some things are wrong with the church, and they don't fully agree, so they don't join. In fact, I met a brother last night at the 5:00 service, and he was like, "Hey, my son is in Oklahoma City. I'm trying to get him to check out this church." I actually do know that pastor really well, so I said, "Is your son just in a tough spot, just in a dry season?"

He said, "Well, he just really feels like the church has let him down." I said, "Oh my gosh. So do I. Tell him so do I." I've tried to say now for over a decade, praise God that there are no perfect churches, because if there were, where could we belong? I don't want to be the one who shows up and jacks it all up, such a perfect church. "Can I be a member?" No longer a perfect church. I don't want to do that. That's one reason.

The second reason is kind of the other side of that coin. You feel like, "Oh man. I'm such a mess. If I join this church... Golly. I would make it even screwier than it is." It's the same side. Both are really predicated upon an arrogant view of oneself. If we took this idea of the church universal and the church local, communing, mingling, marinating with one another, finding that place where we work out the "one anothers" together, and we plug that into our grid...

If you remember the grid, we said we wanted to study the Apostles' Creed because we were hoping it would help create symmetry as believers, that it would shape us and mold us more into what the Lord had for us, that it would create clarity for us, that it would help us understand our community, and ultimately, it would help us counsel ourselves and one another.

With this in view, let's talk about the grid. If we believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, how should that shape our symmetry? Well, let me just step into some spaces and just ask that you trust me. If you know everyone, you don't know anyone. Are you tracking? If you know everyone, you don't know anyone.

The rule of our day because of connectivity is 100 miles wide and a half-inch deep. It's why we can have 100 friends and feel lonely and unknown. It's why we can have 100 friends who we hang out

with, who we go see movies with, who we talk football with, we talk about what Chip and Jojo did to that house. Right? (I lost some of you and gained some of you.)

We can have all of these conversations, but we don't feel known. Nobody knows our hopes. Nobody knows our fears. Nobody knows our background, our struggle. We've hidden those things because we haven't built trust, because we're 100 miles wide. We know 50 people, so we know no one. This is not the pattern of the life of Christ. Jesus had the 12. Then he had the three. Right?

If we watch the rhythm of Jesus, Jesus has an inner circle of three and then a strong group of 12. Then you also see he has this group of 72. You can move it on. You can make the case from what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that there were 500. Yet, Jesus spends the bulk of his time with 12 and some really intense, heart level, praying, sweat drops of blood with three.

He goes up on the Mount of Transfiguration not with 12 but with three. He's in the garden of Gethsemane pleading with God his Father not with the 12, but with the three. I'm telling you, you will never walk in what God has for you in regard to depth and meaning of relationship if you have 60 friends. Now, have your 60 acquaintances, but just be truly dialed in to what a friend actually is.

A friend sticks closer than a brother. See, most of your relationships will be ships passing in the night, right? Out of sight, out of mind. Most of your relationships are that way. If you were to move away, you would probably not keep in touch with most of who you know right now.

Yet God's call on our lives is deep, rich friendships that are rooted and established in how he has called us to himself. If you want symmetry... I understand this is hard because there are so many cool people. There are so many people who it would be awesome to get to know. How do you tell people, "Hey, I'm full. Sorry, my dance card is full. I don't have room for another good friend." You don't act like that.

"Would you like to hang out?"

"No."

"You don't like me?"

"I don't even know if I don't like you. I just have my 12. Did you hear Matt? You are 13. I'm sorry."

No, it doesn't have to be that. We'll get into some pragmatics here in a second. If you know 50 people, you don't know anyone. On the flip side, if you have a small group you do life with and never kind of dig deep into one another's hopes and fears and histories, again, you're not getting all the Lord has for you. See, our histories and hopes and fears shape who we are right now. There's a reason we behave the way we do. There's a reason we react the way we do.

To know one another's backgrounds, to know where we're coming from, to know what we're currently struggling with, to know what we are hoping for starts to build in support and encouragement like we never dreamed. The crew I run with, we're all similar in that we all have children that are elementary age children. Almost all of us are from homes that did not have Christ as King in the forefront of our homes, a glad submission to the Word of God.

That worked itself out in multiple ways. I have friends in my crew who are just kind of hardline fundamentalists. Yesterday was not about candy and dressing up. It was about Satan and worshipping him. I have others who there are drugs and alcohol and absent fathers and serious abuse. We've come together, and we're earnest to love our wives well, to love our children well, to show our sons what it looks like to be men of God in how we encourage and build up our wives, to show our daughters what a man looks like.

When those punk boys show up, they're going to have to earn it rightly. That beautiful last chapter of Song of Solomon where it says, "Build for us a wall covered in armament." That's what I'm trying to do with Audrey and Norah, build walls with armament. I don't know why you're giggling. I just want them to understand the difference between a boy and a man, and I want them to get that even in junior high. I want them to understand it so my daughters will never let a man treat them cheaply or aggressively.

Verbally and emotionally and physically, they deserve the utmost respect and value. They should have zero patience or grace. It is a grace free zone for my daughters when it comes to idiot little boys who think they can emotionally manipulate, physically be aggressive, or spiritually try to manipulate or overcome. I'm the watch keep on that, but the way I'm watch keeping is arming my daughters for the idiocy of boys. Right? It's the women. "Thank God. Someone."

Ultimately, here are our hopes. This is what we're after. What ends up happening, because we know each other's backgrounds and because we know each other's hopes, there is constantly talk about

this. There is constantly, "Hey, what are you going to do here? What's the plan here? Hey, what are you thinking about here? Hey, how is this going? How are you building into Reid in this way? How are you speaking to Audrey and Norah to help them understand and see and sense this? Are you having these kind of awkward, weird conversations with them?"

It's having an understanding of our shared histories, understanding of what our hopes and fears and dreams are that help us kind of mingle and do life at a deep level with one another. That's symmetry. One of the things we have to fight for here at The Village is we're so big that this is going to be a fight. It's so easy to hide here. Are you kidding me? There will be close to 14,000 to 15,000 people at The Village Church this weekend. We have 6,000 members.

You do the math on that. That's thousands and thousands of people, most of whom are just kind of coming here. For tons in the community, what that means is Christmas and Easter. This is where they come on Christmas and Easter. No, no, no. God would call us to belong, so we try to shrink the church. In fact, next week, across all of our campuses, we'll do GroupConnect. GroupConnect is our attempt to connect you to others who are serious about pursuing the Lord.

At least we hope they're serious about pursuing the Lord. We want to create for you a small context in which you might pursue these types of relationships. On clarity, I'll just state it simply. God has called you to himself. In calling you to himself, he has called you to others, both to be a blessing and to receive the blessing of others.

On community, when we think about the community and what these truths mean for community, we're going to repeat some things together. Here we go. I'm going to say a sentence, and I want you to say it back to me. Okay? "I cannot do it all. I cannot have it all." I wanted you to say that because you can't do it all, and you can't have it all. Let me unpack that a little bit.

You and I as finite creatures are limited in time and resources. What that means is we're constantly making tradeoffs, constantly. To say yes to *this* is to say no to *this*. Sometimes we're saying yes to *this* even before we know *this* was an option. Every time you say yes, you are saying no to something else. You have limited hours, limited energy, limited money, limited time, limited relational capacity.

You and I live in a constant state of trading off. "I will say yes to *this*. Saying yes to *this* means I say no to *this*." This is true about your life and mine. The question is, will we prioritize, will we create

space, will we create buffers in which relationships might actually flourish and grow? Our culture runs 100 miles an hour an inch in front of the car in front of us, right? We're zooming. Always working, always on, always dialed in, always connecting with new things.

If we don't prioritize and create space, our lives will live us. We will not live them. In fact, that's the theme, the banner over so many of your lives. Now, you aren't living your life; it's living you. There are all these things you would love to do, but you can't. No, you can. You've chosen not to. I know because I'm right in the middle of a battle for my own soul.

I have been the pastor of this church and lived in this community for 13 years. Two weeks ago was the first time I ever went to a Marcus High School football game. From Flower Mound to Lewisville, this isn't a time for... It's "one anothers." It's the system my kids are in. I won't cheer against them. Two weeks ago, I went to a Marcus football game. I coached my son's flag football team for the first time ever. I've gotten to know principals and teachers. I've been involved in the community.

To do that, I had to say no to travelling and to doing really cool, God-sized stuff. To put down roots, to belong to a given location... Four 12-year-old girls spent the night at my house Friday. It sounded like hyenas were killing a zebra or something. That's why I love the ranch style house we live in. It's far enough that it's like there's either something being killed by coyotes out back, or the girls are having a blast. I got to be there for that, and it was awesome. To do that, I had to say no to some things.

Here's the real trick, guys. The things I said no to are really good things. The opportunities I get are not, "Hey, would you like to come kill someone?" No. "Would you like to come be bored out of your mind?" No. The opportunities I get are incredible opportunities, but they required some tradeoffs. Those tradeoffs were I wasn't able to coach my son's team. I wasn't able to be around in the community. I wasn't able to go to Marcus games and get to know teachers and get to know even some of our covenant community.

It was a tradeoff I had made. It was a foolish tradeoff, and I'm trying to walk that line now, being who God has called me to be, but being firmly planted in the community God has put me in. I'll still be travelling, but nowhere near the volume I historically have. It's tradeoffs, and you're making the same tradeoffs. My question for you is...*Are you prioritizing and creating buffer so you might sow into deep, meaningful relationships?* It will not accidentally happen. You're going to have to create space for it. You're going to have to be serious about it.

It doesn't naturally happen in our back porch, high fence communities. It doesn't. Even the layout of the suburbs doesn't give itself to these types of people-to-people relationships, which is why my guess is you might know your next door neighbor's name, but there's not a lot of deep, life-on-life relationship there. Maybe there is, but you would be an outlier if that's true about you.

When it comes to counsel, if we were looking at the raw data of your life (indulge me here), you probably shouldn't listen to you a lot. If we're just looking at raw data, 90 percent of everything you've ever said or done, you've said and done because you believed you were right. Correct? You have about a 10 percent time there where you're like, "I know this is wrong. I know I shouldn't say this, but I'm going to say it. I know this is wrong. I know I shouldn't do it, but I'm going to do it."

That's probably not the full pattern of your life. The full pattern of your life is, "I think this is right. I know this is right, so I'm going to do this." The mountain of data is that you should probably stop that. Historically, I've said it like this. No one lies to you like you do. No one has betrayed you like you have. No one has stabbed you in the back quite as often as you have stabbed yourself in the back. No one has failed to come through for you as consistently as you have failed to come through for you.

That's why the Bible says in Proverbs 11:14, **"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."** Again in Proverbs 24:6: **"...for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory."** The Christian is open to the counsel of others. Our posture before a holy God and our brothers and sisters should be one of humility where we are earnest to hear wise counsel.

One of the things we've done with our Home Groups here... If you come to GroupConnect next week, you'll see some of this. We fight for multi-gen groups because we think multi-gen groups are important. We would love for you to be all together with the whole group of young marrieds, but then you're all young marrieds. Or pool together a bunch of singles or pool together just a bunch of college kids. I'm not saying there's not a place for you to be with your peers.

I'll tell you what I'm hungry for right now, older men and women who have already been where I am. Gosh. I don't know what to do about this. I'm not sure how to navigate this season of my life. I'm 41 with a 12-year old, 9-year-old, 6-year-old. I can't tell you how often I'm confused. Not biblically. I

know the biblical charge on this. How do I live this out? How do I apply this? Somebody tell me that these things move or this doesn't or this is where I should be investing my time.

I've invited into my life counselors. I haven't waited for them to feel comfortable. I have said, "If you see inconsistency in me, if you see where I can be stronger, please be fearless enough to sit me down and tell me." The communion of saints affects how we counsel ourselves and counsel others in that I counsel myself not to trust myself, and I ask others to speak into my life.

The Bible says (don't get upset at me) you're a fool if you have not done this. If you have not invited others to engage you, if you have not invited others... "Where am I weak? Where am I out of step with the gospel? Where can I be stronger? How can I live this? How can I love my wife more faithfully? How can I be a better father? What does it look like where I am in life to faithfully serve the Lord and balance all of these responsibilities I have?" You invite others in to help, or the Bible says you are a fool, trusting in yourself.

Let me end our time together with a Max Lucado quote and two questions. "Questions can make hermits out of us, driving us into hiding, yet the cave has no answers. Christ distributes courage through community. He dissipates doubts through fellowship." I'm going to read that sentence again. I want you to think about what Max is saying there. "Christ distributes courage through community. He dissipates doubts through fellowship."

Brothers and sisters, if you lack courage or are struggling with doubt, the answer to either of these struggles isn't to run until you can pretend you don't have such things but to dive head first into the community, acknowledging that you do have such things. "He never deposits all knowledge in one person but distributes pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to many. When you interlock your understanding with mine, and we share our discoveries, when we mix, mingle, confess, and pray, Christ speaks."

The tangible presence of God is most often revealed in living among the communion of the saints. When I got sick six years ago, it was not my Twitter followers who brought me great comfort. It wasn't any of those outside these walls or those who podcast or vodcast or read books. That's not... Josh Patterson, Michael Bleecker, and Brian Miller showed up to Baylor Downtown at 5:00 a.m. When I was finally put in my ICU room that night, it was close to midnight.

I have no memory of the picture, but I do have the picture of Josh and Brian and Bleecker at my bedside where they had not left all day. Brian Miller went to every doctor's appointment I had for

the next three months. He helped me navigate well my family dynamics in that season, coached me and helped me suffer well. I could not drive myself down to radiation treatments, so these brothers put together a list, and they took turns five days a week driving me down to Baylor Downtown to get my brain radiated to drive all the way back. Two hours in the car for 12 minutes of therapy.

On the day of trouble, it was the communion of saints that let me feel and sense the presence of God in my life. There is nothing. I don't believe there is anything as beautiful and freeing than coming clean to other Christians of your struggles, shortcomings, and failures, and having them respond to, "Oh, thank God. Me too. Maybe we can fight this together."

See, sin would have you believe that you've gone too far. Sin would have you believe that no one else struggles like you struggle with what you struggle with. I'm trying to encourage you that you are believing a lie. To trust and build trust with the communion of the saints is how we live out and walk in right relationship with God and to one another.

I have two questions. *How are you living out the "one anothers" right now?* Is this it? Is you showing up here and listening to a sermon the extent of your Christian walk? That's unfortunate. You're robbing yourself of some really beautiful things. The second thing I would ask is more on the practical side of things. *In what ways are you staking steps, are you making aware, are you creating buffers so that the relationships with others might deepen?*

Are you in a group? Are you creating space to do life with others in that group? Are you showing up to things like Elder-Led Prayer, which we'll have tonight, which is a smaller room where we cry out and pray together? Again, the room gets a lot smaller at things like that. That's an opportunity for us to feel like we're mingling in a way that encourages our hearts. Are you living out the "one anothers"? What steps need to be taken to increase the opportunity for deep relationships with one another? Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, again and as always, the opportunity just to let the weight of your Word press on us and shape us. We are a people who believe in a triune God, a God who is, at his essence, relational. Therefore, we as his people are relational. We're hungry for relationships. We're hungry for friendships. We were shaped and molded through college by deep friendships.

Yet, now with work and kids or work and hobbies, our friendships have begun to wane. They're not a priority. They're seen as optional. We rob ourselves of depth of soul. We rob ourselves of laughter. We rob ourselves of vitality and meaning by being 100 miles wide and half an inch deep. Take us deep, Holy Spirit. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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